

The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

1. A method for providing user access to electronic images of a physical text based on user ownership of the physical text, comprising:

- (a) receiving a request for access to one or more electronic images of a physical text in which the request identifies the user submitting the request;
- (b) confirming user ownership of the physical text based on the user identity;
- (c) consulting one or more access rules that define an amount of content in electronic images of the physical text that can be provided to the user based on the user's ownership of the physical text; and
- (d) providing user access to the one or more electronic images of the physical text in accordance with the one or more access rules.

2. The method of Claim 1, further comprising providing access to a user-personalized library of electronic content and automatically including the provided electronic images of the physical text in the user's personalized library for later access.

3. The method of Claim 2, wherein automatically including the provided electronic images in the user's personalized library comprises storing a link in the user's personalized library, in which accessing the link provides the user access to the images in a centralized database of images.

4. The method of Claim 2, further comprising setting a flag associated with the images in the user's personalized library to indicate that user ownership of the physical text has been confirmed.

5. The method of Claim 1, wherein confirming user ownership comprises reviewing purchase information pertaining to the user and determining whether the user has purchased the physical text.

6. The method of Claim 5, further comprising communicating with a third party regarding purchase information of the user.

7. The method of Claim 1, wherein confirming user ownership comprises receiving from the user a receipt evidencing purchase of the physical text.

8. The method of Claim 1, wherein confirming user ownership comprises receiving from the user an image of a page from the physical text.

9. The method of Claim 1, wherein the one or more access rules permit user access to electronic images of the entire physical text.

10. The method of Claim 1, wherein user ownership of the physical text results from the user's purchase of an item that the physical text normally accompanies.

11. The method of Claim 10, wherein the physical text is an operating manual for the item purchased by the user.

12. A method for providing a central database with electronic images of physical texts and enabling access thereto by multiple users, comprising:

(a) acquiring images of pages of physical texts in which identifying information is associated with the images to identify the physical texts from which the images are acquired;

(b) storing the page images and the associated identifying information in the central database;

(c) receiving information indicating a user's ownership of a particular physical text; and

(d) enabling the user to access page images of the particular physical text in the central database based on the user's ownership of the physical text.

13. The method of Claim 12, wherein acquiring images comprises scanning printed pages of a physical text.

14. The method of Claim 12, wherein acquiring images comprises receiving page images and associated identifying information from a user upload.

15. The method of Claim 14, wherein user-uploaded page images and associated identifying information are automatically included in a personalized library of electronic content maintained at the central database for the user.

16. The method of Claim 12, wherein enabling the user to access page images comprises setting a flag associated with the user and the physical work in the central database signifying the user's ownership the physical text.

17. The method of Claim 12, wherein receiving information indicating a user's ownership includes one of receiving information that the user has purchased the physical text or the user has purchased an item normally accompanied by the physical text.

18. Apparatus for providing user access to electronic images of a physical text based on user ownership of the physical text, comprising:

(a) means for receiving a request from a user to access one or more electronic images of a physical text, wherein the request identifies the user;

(b) means for confirming user ownership of the physical text based on the user's identity;

(c) means for consulting one or more access rules that define an amount of content in electronic images that can be provided to the user based on the user's ownership of the physical text; and

(d) means for providing user access to the one or more requested electronic images in accordance with the one or more access rules.

19. The apparatus of Claim 18, further comprising means for providing access to a user-personalized library of electronic content and automatically including the provided electronic images of the physical text in the user's personalized library for later access.

20. The apparatus of Claim 18, further comprising means for setting a flag associated with the user and a physical text signifying the user's ownership of the physical text.